

Testimony of Irene Budzynski, RN  
SB 968 An Act Concerning Reports of Nurse Staffing Levels  
Public Health Committee  
March 15, 2013

I want to thank the Public Health Committee for taking testimony on Raised Bill 968. I ask you to support the reporting of staffing levels to the Department of Public Health.

Put yourself in the following scenario: Last week you were on vacation with your spouse, developed abdominal pain on the trip, and went to your doctor upon your return. Tests were done which resulted in the diagnosis of cancer. The whirlwind of more tests, oncology consults, and a hospital admission began. You are to receive chemotherapy. All you know about chemotherapy is what you have heard from friends and magazine articles and you are terrified. You watch as the drip of a potentially lethal drug works itself into your body and you wonder if you will survive. What about the inevitable nausea, the tiredness, the loss of hair? If this chemotherapy is killing cancer cells, isn't it also killing healthy cells?

Thinking you will have 1:1 attention as a patient is quickly obliterated when you witness the chaos of the hospital floor. Bed alarms never stop their insistent attention while nurses and aides literally run the gamut of the unit trying to prevent falls and injuries. You want to talk to someone with answers regarding your treatment, but no one is available. You are tethered to an IV pole and are too weak to get up by yourself. The anonymous voice who answers your call light assures you that "someone" will be in as soon as possible. What he/she doesn't say is that the nurse/aide is in a contact isolation room and cannot get in to see you very quickly. Your anxiety increases with each passing moment and your fears are exacerbated as to what kind of care you will actually receive. You find out that your nurse has 6 other patients for which to care.

This is health care 2013. The nurses and aides are on the front lines with no support from the generals who dictate grids, budgets, and paperwork. We are on the bottom rung, pressured from the top to perform at an inhuman level. We are more than "just bedside nurses". We are the lifeline for the public. Many of us do not have a Ph.D. or a Master's Degree; we have a degree in life and death experiences which far outweighs any diploma. However, our responsibilities are increasing out of proportion with patient acuity. Assigning a concrete number to staff a shift is not reasonable or safe.

In my 22 years of experience as a med-surg and oncology nurse, I have seen a steady decline in quality of care we are allowed to give. At this time I ask you to support Raised Bill 968 that will require hospitals to report staffing levels and how they adjust for acuity.

Will you please be counted in the population which advocates better patient care? I ask you to support SB 968.

Thank you,

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